

AS EXPECTED, Wycombe Wanderers duly gained their three Rothmans Isthmian League points at the expense of basement boys Clapton on Saturday, plus the added bonus of £40 from the sponsors. But the way they achieved their victory was far from convincing.

After starting well, Wycombe gradually deteriorated in the first half and only really hit their best form in the last hour. The trouble seemed to be upfront. Steve Perrin and Dylan Evans were both disappointing and missed a host of chances. They failed to dominate in the air and sometimes looked slow and lethargic.

It was just as well then, that Wycombe midfield trio of Larry Pritchard, Terry Reardon and Graham Mackenzie were at their best. They accounted for three of the goals while the other was scored by Mick Holifield, who normally plays in midfield, but was pushed upfront for this game.

The front line lacked the deft touches of Tony Horseman, ruled out with a back injury, and the incision of Keith Searle, who was at the ground to watch the game. Holifield's move left the way clear for the return of young "Jock" Mackenzie, for his first game since October 16.

And on his performance on Saturday, it is difficult to see just why he hasn't been in the side regularly. His creative ability foxed Clapton time and again (and once or twice his colleagues) and he was rewarded for a fine display with the third goal. Reardon's distribution was also immaculate while his ability to get up to the high ball in midfield won Wycombe a wealth of possession.

At first it seemed Clapton

were in for a real hiding. In only the fourth minute Wycombe were a goal up. Mick Holifield was fouled outside the area and Reardon's firmly struck free kick was glanced in by Pritchard's head at the near

and then Dave Emmanuel managed to force his way between the two centre backs. Maskell was out in a flash but could only parry the ball into the path of Peter Eustace. The centre forward curved the ball

ball and tried to fist out every corner.

Bob Pamplin was carried off with a cartilage injury on the hour and five minutes later Mackenzie put Wycombe three up. Holifield's inswinging corner was only half cleared by the defence and Mackenzie drove the ball through a crowded goalmouth.

The corner barrage was beginning to take its toll on the visitors. Basic mistakes started to creep into their game and after three more corners, Pritchard added the fourth and best goal of the match. Again the ball was only half cleared out to Holifield who slung over another left foot cross. Pritchard met the ball perfectly on the volley and thumped it past a helpless keeper.

To their credit, Clapton kept plugging away and Spicer again tested Maskell with a couple of well struck long range efforts in the closing stages. Then, with five minutes remaining, Wycombe were given the chance to make it five from the penalty spot. Holifield was brought down by Kevin McCarthy and referee Pond had no doubt about the decision. With Horseman out, it was left to Dave Bullock to take the spot kick but keeper Hafford guessed the right way and managed to push the kick aside.

Before the final whistle, Perrin hit the upright and from the final corner, the 16th won by Wycombe compared with Clapton's solitary one, Perrin crashed the ball into the side netting.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; R. Williams, P. Wood, D. Bullock, R. Grant; T. Reardon, J. Mackenzie, L. Pritchard; M. Holifield, D. Evans, S. Perrin. Sub: P. Birdseye (not used).

CLAPTON: A. Hafford; D. Warden, R. Barlow, K. McCarthy, W. Batho; R. Spicer, S. Spicer, A. Pamplin (sub J. Panayiotou 60 mins), A. Taylor; P. Eustace, D. Emmanuel.

Referee: D. E. Pond (Chelmsford).

Half-time: 2-0. **Goalscorers:** Wycombe — Pritchard 2 (4, 73), Holifield (43), Mackenzie (65).

Actual paying attendance: 1,208.
Approximate attendance: 1,400.

Wycombe Wanderers 4, Clapton 0

Report by STUART EARP

post. Sixty seconds later Perrin was brought down on the edge of the box and from the free kick Mackenzie drove the ball straight at keeper Alan Hafford after a goalmouth scramble.

The goal, however, had an adverse effect on Wanderers. Instead of cashing in on their early advantage, they went off the boil, became too intricate and were held off by a Clapton side that never stopped trying. For a club situated at the foot of the Division with 94 goals conceded this term, their spirit was admirable. They were constantly praising each other's efforts and but for some clever defensive covering by Roger Grant they could have equalised in the 12th minute.

Stan Spicer, whose accurate long range shooting kept home keeper John Maskell on his toes, fired one drive just wide

over Maskell and towards the empty net but he hadn't bargained for Grant, who, close to the line, blocked the ball with his body and coolly returned it to Maskell.

Perrin had a fierce header beaten out by Hafford and then Evans broke clear but fired his shot wide of the far post as Wycombe surged forward. After those two efforts, however, the Blues lost their early cohesion and passes often went astray. A goal was badly needed to enliven the game but it didn't come until the 43rd minute. Roger Grant's free kick curled towards the near post where Holifield beat Hafford's punch and back-headed into the net.

It was a series of corners that eventually sealed Clapton's fate. In this department, keeper Hafford badly let his side down. He refused to attempt to catch the

Tony leaves

WYCOMBE Wanderers' midfield man Tony Brothers, who joined the club at the start of the season, has signed on for Rothmans Isthmian League Division One rivals Hitchin.

The move is no real surprise as Brothers was having great difficulty in travelling to Wycombe from his Hertfordshire home and had been unable to gain a regular first team place. In all he played 11 league games, one F.A. Cup tie, three Premier Midweek matches and three friendlies during his stay. Undoubtedly his finest performance was against Newport in the Cup, when he came on as substitute and played a superb game at full back in Wycombe's 3-1 victory.

TICKETS for C block season ticket holders will be held until one hour before the kick off (2 p.m.) of Saturday's Amateur Cup tie against Hornchurch.